

Para Hills High School

Resolving Complaints Procedures

Introduction

At Para Hills High School we are responsible for ensuring a safe, supportive and productive environment. The aim of resolving complaints is to establish procedures through which:

- all members of the school community including visitors¹, have access to clearly defined processes designed to facilitate resolution of grievances;
- all complaints are resolved in a timely manner ensuring that confidentiality, equity and due process applies

These procedures cover, but are not limited to grievances which may arise as a result of: bullying as is defined by Para Hills High School policy

What is a grievance?

Grievances are often the result of unresolved issues, problems, or conflicts that have been avoided or not addressed to the satisfaction of those involved.

What can we do about a grievance?

Resolution of issues through personal actions at the local level is encouraged. Where employees feel that an action is unreasonable, unfair or has an unduly negative impact on an individual or group, they should take up their concerns directly with the people involved where possible. Early action at this level generally provides the best opportunity for positive resolution.

Process

Depending on the nature and seriousness of the grievance, staff, students, parents/caregivers, and their families, visitors may choose to deal with it according to one or more of the following levels of grievance resolution:

- Personal Resolution
- Formal complaint

Personal Resolution: resolving conflict at the school level

Resolving conflict at the school level allow staff, students, parents/caregivers, and their families, visitors to deal with a grievance with or without reporting the incident to anyone.

This may include:

- Discussing and resolving the matter with the person responsible for the behaviour
- Seeking confidential advice and support from the worksite manager, care group teacher, counsellor or contact person(s) in order to explore strategies to deal personally with the grievance
- Seeking confidential advice for employee related matters from DECS Ethical Standards and Merit Protection Unit (ESMPU) or appropriate union

When is personal resolution of a grievance not an option?

Some things should not be confronted or addressed at a personal level but should immediately be reported. These include unlawful or criminal acts such as physical or sexual assault, fraud, threatening behaviour or verbal abuse.

Formal Complaint

Employees, volunteers, children, and their families/caregivers have the right to lodge a formal complaint about a grievance in the first instance with the Principal/line managers.

If the person making the complaint is not satisfied with the way the grievance has been managed at the school level they may lodge a formal complaint with the district director or department personnel.

The formal complaint is lodged in writing and marked confidential. An investigating officer will be assigned to the case and will make a determination on the basis of an investigation or will determine a process for handling the complaint promptly. Both the complainant and the respondent will be provided with an opportunity to respond to the findings of an investigation and will be informed of the outcome.

¹ Visitors may access the school resolving complaints procedures from the front office ...

Preparing a written complaint?

You may wish to talk through the issue(s) with someone you trust in order to clarify the complaint and consider the outcome or remedy you seek. Write succinctly, using the following guide to help you:

- Describe the nature of the complaint.
- Give the details of the circumstances (Who? What? Where? When? How?).
- Provide evidence:
 - Do you have documentation?
 - Are there witnesses?
 - How else can you prove your allegations?
- State the outcome you seek.
- If your preferred outcome is not achievable, state a reasonable alternative.

Resolving complaints

Depending on the outcome of the investigation the action taken must be appropriate to the gravity of the behaviour and the age and position of those involved. It might include but not restricted to:

- conference with parties
- engaging in the mediation between the concerned parties to resolve the conflict
- a verbal /written warning or direction to an employee, child or student to change their behaviour
- referral to counselling
- a verbal/written apology
- finding the claim has no substance

In the case of students, counselling and monitoring procedures need to be established in consultation with parent(s)/caregiver(s)

Unresolved complaints in relation to racial discrimination and equity issues can be dealt with through the *South Australian Equal opportunity Commission and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Federal*.

Where can I get help?

Advice can be sought from the following external agencies

DECS, Northern Adelaide Region
Telephone 8256 8111

Equal Opportunity Commission of South Australia
Telephone 8207 1977
Web www.eoc.sa.gov.au

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (Sydney)
Telephone 1300 656 419
Web www.humanrights.gov.au

Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement
Telephone 8113 3777
Web www.lsc.sa.gov.au
Email info@alrm.org.au

Legal Services Commission
Telephone 1300 366 424
Web www.lsc.sa.gov.au

Union Australian Education Union
Telephone 08) 8272 1399
Web www.aeusa.asn.au

Ombudsman (state)
Telephone 1800 182 150
Web www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au